

*What is claimed is:*

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## CLAIMS

1. A method for providing an on-line appointment between a user and a service provider over a network, said method comprising:

- (a) receiving a request for appointment availability of the service provider during a time period;
- (b) determining available appointment times within the time period for the service provider;
- (c) transmitting the available appointment times to the user;
- (d) receiving a selected appointment time from the available appointment times; and
- (e) setting the on-line appointment between the user and the service provider at the selected appointment time.

2. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the time period is a day.

3. A method as recited in claim 1,

- wherein said receiving (a) of the request for appointment availability includes a time duration for the on-line appointment, and
- wherein said determining (b) of the available appointment times are those times during the time period that the service provider is available for at least the time duration.

4. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said setting (e) comprises:

- (e1) transmitting verification information for the on-line appointment to the user;

(e2) receiving a verification of the verification information for the on-line appointment; and

(e3) subsequently setting the on-line appointment between the user and the service provider at the selected appointment time when the verification has been received.

5. A method as recited in claim 1,

wherein said setting (e) of the on-line appointment sets a requested on-line appointment, and

wherein said method further comprises:

(f) subsequently receiving a confirmation for the requested on-line appointment.

6. A method as recited in claim 5, wherein said method further comprises:

(g) updating the requested on-line appointment to a confirmed on-line appointment after the confirmation has been received.

7. A method as recited in claim 5, wherein the time period is a predetermined day, and wherein the network is the Internet.

8. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said method further comprises:

(f) subsequently rendering the selected appointment time for the service provider unavailable.

9. A method for providing an on-line appointment over a network, said method comprising:

(a) transmitting a user's electronic calendar to a user;

- By  
C. J. O'Neil  
0042059
- (b) transmitting a list of available service providers to the user;
  - (c) receiving a request for appointment availability of a selected one of the available service providers;
  - (d) determining available time slots for the selected one of the available service providers;
  - (e) transmitting the available time slots to the user;
  - (f) receiving a time slot selection from the available time slots to establish an appointment with the selected one of the available service providers;
  - (g) updating the user's electronic calendar with the appointment; and
  - (h) updating an electronic calendar for the selected one of the available service providers with the appointment.

10. A method as recited in claim 9,  
wherein the request for appointment availability includes a time period,  
and  
wherein said determining (d) determines the available time slots for the time period.

11. A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the time period is a day.

12. A computer readable medium including computer code for providing an on-line appointment between a user and a service provider over a network, said computer readable medium comprising:

computer program code for receiving a request for appointment availability of the service provider;

computer program code for determining available appointment slots for the service provider;

computer program code for transmitting the available appointment slots to the user;

computer program code for receiving a selected appointment slot from the available appointment slots; and

computer program code for setting the on-line appointment between the user and the service provider at the selected appointment slot.

13. A computer readable medium including computer code for providing an on-line appointment over a network, said computer readable medium comprising:

computer program code for transmitting a user's electronic calendar to a user;

computer program code for transmitting a list of available service providers to the user;

computer program code for receiving a request for appointment availability of a selected one of the available service providers;

computer program code for determining available time slots for the selected one of the available service providers;

computer program code for transmitting the available time slots to the user;

computer program code for receiving a time slot selection from the available time slots to establish an appointment with the selected one of the available service providers;

computer program code for updating the user's electronic calendar with the appointment; and

computer program code for updating an electronic calendar for the selected one of the available service providers with the appointment.

14. A method for doing business over a global computer network, said method comprising:

(a) registering service providers over the global computer network to identify at least offered services, appointment hours, contact information for the registered service providers;

(b) providing an on-line calendar for each of the registered service providers;

(c) registering individuals over the global computer network;

(d) providing an on-line calendar for each of the registered individuals; and

(e) setting of appointments with certain of the registered service providers when the appointment have been requested by any of the registered individuals, and for each appointment being set, said setting (e) at least places appointment indications on the on-line calendars of the associated one of the registered service providers and the associated one of the individuals.

15. A method as recited in claim 14, wherein said providing (d) provides the on-line calendars for each of the registered individuals without cost to the registered individuals.

16. A method as recited in claim 15, wherein said providing (b) provides the on-line calendars for each of the registered service providers for a fee.

17. A method as recited in claim 14, wherein the registered service providers are provided in an on-line directory, and wherein during said setting (e) of the appointments, the registered individuals are able to locate appropriate service providers using the on-line directory.

18. A method as recited in claim 17; wherein the website provides on-line calendars, and wherein as on-line appointments are made, the on-line calendars of the users are automatically updated.

19. A method as recited in claim 18, wherein the on-line appointments have a duration, and

wherein the duration of the on-line appointments is determined by a type of appointment.

20. An on-line appointment system that supports a large number of users in making appointments over the Internet, comprising:

an appointment server coupled to the network; and

an appointment database coupled to said appointment server,

wherein said appointment server and said appointment database together provide storage and access for calendars of the users and provide assistance to users to request appointments and thereafter permit confirmation the appointments.

21. An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 20, wherein said appointment server also provides reminders for confirmed appointments.

22. An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 20, wherein said on-line appointment system further comprises:

a synchronization application that provides for automated review of the appointments that have been requested to determine whether the requested appointments conflict with entries in a local software calendar.

23. An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 20, wherein the users include consumers and service providers, and

wherein said on-line appointment system further comprises a business directory of service providers.

24. An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 20, wherein said appointment database further stores user information for consumers and service providers to reduce subsequent data entry.

25. A method for making on-line appointments over a computer network, said method comprising:

(a) registering as a user of an on-line appointment system, said registering providing a user name, contact information, and appointment availability information for the user, the appointment availability information indicating days and times during which the user is generally available to receive appointments;

(b) maintaining on-line calendars for the registered users, the on-line calendars including scheduled appointments or events for the respective registered user; and

(c) scheduling appointments between users, said scheduling (c) including at least

(c1) receiving an appointment request from a first registered user requesting an appointment with a second registered user; and

(c2) selecting an appointment date and time for the appointment in accordance with the appointment availability information for the second registered user and non-conflicting with any other previously scheduled appointments or events in the on-line calendar of the second registered user.

26. A method as recited in claim 25, wherein said scheduling (c) further comprises:



(c3) scheduling the appointment for the first registered user and the second registered user at the selected appointment date and time.

27. A method as recited in claim 25, wherein said scheduling (c) further comprises:

(c3) tentatively scheduling the appointment for the first registered user and the second registered user at the selected appointment date and time; and

(c4) subsequently confirming the scheduled appointment by the second registered user.

28. A method as recited in claim 25, wherein said scheduling (c) further comprises:

(c3) tentatively scheduling the appointment for the first registered user and the second registered user at the selected appointment date and time;

(c4) providing the scheduled appointment as a tentative appointment on the on-line calendars of the first registered user and the second registered user;

(c5) subsequently confirming the scheduled appointment by the second registered user; and

(c6) thereafter updating the scheduled appointment from the tentative appointment to a confirmed appointment on the on-line calendars of the first registered user and the second registered user.

29. A computer implemented method for providing on-line appointment services over a global computer network, said method comprising:

registering service providers for on-line appointments over the global computer network, said registering providing appointment availability information for the registered service providers; and

scheduling on-line appointments between users and the registered service providers over the global computer network based on the availability information.

30. A method as recited in claim 29,

wherein said registering of the service providers over the global computer network identifies at least offered services, available appointment times, contact information for the registered service providers.

31. A method as recited in claim 29, wherein said method further comprises:  
registering users for on-line calendars over the global computer network.

32. A method as recited in claim 31, wherein said method further comprises:  
providing an on-line calendar for each of the registered users and the registered service providers.

33. A method as recited in claim 32, wherein said scheduling of the on-line appointments includes placing appointment indications on the on-line calendars of the associated ones of the registered service providers and the users.

34. A method as recited in claim 32, wherein said registering, said providing of the on-line calendars and said scheduling of the on-line appointments is without cost to the users, and

wherein at least one of said registering, said providing of the on-line calendars and said scheduling of the on-line appointments is fee-based to the service providers.

35. A method as recited in claim 29, wherein said method further comprises:

providing an on-line directory of service providers.

36. A method as recited in claim 35, wherein said method further comprises:

providing a search facility that users can search for a particular service provider by searching through the on-line directory,

wherein once the particular service provider is found using the search facility, said scheduling of an on-line appointment between a user and the particular service provider over the global computer network.